

 NORFOLK Department of Police	Administrative General Order - 130: News Media Policy		
	Office of Preparation: Strategic Management Division (mar)		
	CALEA:	54.1.3	
	VLEPSC:	ADM. 22.01	
LEGAL REVIEW DATE:	7-22-2015	PRESCRIBED DATE:	7/28/15
City Attorney:	Jack E. Cloud	City Manager/Director of Public Safety:	[Signature]
APPROVED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE:		[Signature]	

Purpose

To provide policy and procedures for the accurate and timely release of information, within legal and investigative limitations, to news media representatives.

Policy

- A. The Chief of Police shall authorize the release of all information to the news media.
- B. Information concerning the Norfolk Police Department's day to day operations may be released to the news media by the bureau chiefs, field commanders, division commanders, and Public Information Office personnel.
- C. No department employee is authorized to release any confidential or investigative information unless authorized by the Chief of Police.

Supersedes:

1. G.O. ADM-130, dated May 23, 2014
2. Any previously issued directive conflicting with this order

Order Contents:

- I. Public Information Officer
- II. Dissemination of Information
- III. Joint Investigations with Other Agencies
- IV. Press Releases
- V. Media Access to Major Incidents and Crime Scenes
- VI. Offense Information for Media Release

I. Public Information Officer (ADM. 22.01)

The public information officer (PIO) shall be the primary point of contact for media representatives regarding police matters.

- A. A PIO shall be on call 24 hours a day and can be contacted through the Emergency Communications Center (ECC). The responsibilities of the PIO include:
 - 1. Responding to media inquiries regarding police matters.
 - 2. Coordinating the release of information regarding suspects, victims and witnesses.
 - 3. Coordinating the release of information concerning on-going investigations and operations.
 - 4. Coordinating the release of information relating to crisis situations.
 - 5. Arranging news conferences.
 - 6. Coordinating AMBER Alerts in accordance with G.O. OPR-720: Juveniles.
- B. The PIO is assigned to the Public Information Office and reports directly to the Deputy Chief of Police.

II. Dissemination of Information

- A. All documents generated by department personnel for departmental purposes are the property of the Norfolk Police Department.
- B. Information contained in actual documents or their copies may only be released:
 - 1. As authorized by the Chief of Police as set forth in departmental rules, directives, and standard operating procedures.
 - 2. By other direction or permission from the Chief of Police.
 - 3. In response to a Freedom of Information Act request or subpoena approved and released by the City Attorney.
- C. Personnel shall not release any information which could interfere with an official investigation or place a victim, witness, or any other person in jeopardy. The following information shall not be released:
 - 1. Information which may prejudice a court case, or hinder an investigation.

2. Confidential police operations.
 3. Names of deceased or seriously injured persons prior to notification of next of kin.
 4. Names of witnesses who wish to maintain their privacy.
 5. Personal opinions.
 6. Information about internal affairs investigations.
 7. Any other information deemed confidential by the Chief of Police.
- D. All requests for information concerning departmental policy or specific statements on controversial issues shall be referred to the Chief of Police or the PIO without comment.
- E. Except where legally required, Norfolk Police Department photographs or films of the following shall not be released, except with the approval of the Chief of Police:
1. Crime scenes.
 2. The victims of any crime, accident, or suicide.
 3. Juveniles (persons under 18 years of age) unless subject to an AMBER Alert, or unless certified as an adult by judicial authority.
 4. Members of the department.
- F. Sensitive and Confidential Operations
- Information concerning the activities of any special police operations deemed to be confidential by the field commander shall not be disclosed, except with the permission of the division commander, bureau chief or the Chief of Police.
- G. A commanding officer may release basic information to the news media as soon as practical during the preliminary investigation of any accident, crime scene or incident.
1. Exceptions are the information restrictions listed in Section II. C and information related to juveniles, covered in Section II. J.
 2. Only the following information, excluding information restrictions listed in Section II. C, may be released:

- a. The nature, time, location and a brief description of the incident.
 - b. Name, age, sex and block number of address of the person(s) involved.
 - c. Nature and extent of injuries, if known, and where and by whom transported for medical treatment.
 - d. Arrested suspect's name, age, block number and street name, and offenses charged.
 - e. Wanted suspect information when there is some form of legal process on file (e.g., warrants, capias, etc.).
 - f. Officer's name and assignment.
- H. Every effort shall be made within the limits of these guidelines to cooperate with the media to facilitate the prompt release of factual information.
 - 1. After hours, except as authorized elsewhere in this order, media inquiries shall be referred to the first available person, in the following sequence:
 - a. The on-call PIO.
 - b. Field Commander.
 - c. On-duty police supervisors.
 - 2. All representatives of the news media shall be treated equally without favoritism or discrimination.
 - a. When information is released by the department, it will be issued as identical information to all interested media bureaus.
 - b. Independent inquiries initiated by news media representatives may be honored at the time of inquiry.
- I. Any information released by department personnel to the media shall be reported to the PIO as soon as possible.
- J. Information regarding juveniles shall be afforded the following additional protection:
 - 1. The identity of a juvenile victim shall not be released.

2. The identity of a juvenile arrestee shall not be released unless being tried as an adult.
3. Records pertaining to juveniles shall be handled in accordance with State Code §2.2-3706, Disclosure of criminal records; limitations, and §16.1-301, Confidentiality of law-enforcement records; disclosures to school principal, as well as procedures outlined in G.O. OPR-720: Juveniles.

III. Joint Investigations with Other Agencies (ADM. 22.01.h)

The agency which has investigative and/or operational jurisdiction shall be responsible for the release of the information.

IV. Press Releases (ADM. 22.01.c)

- A. Formal press releases shall be disseminated as necessitated by specific occurrences and events in the city.
- B. Copies of all formal press releases dealing with subjects of a sensitive nature or of major significance, including collateral materials, shall be submitted to, and reviewed by the Chief of Police, the City of Norfolk Communications Office and the City Manager, prior to dissemination.
- C. Formal press releases dealing with routine matters may be released without prior approval; however, a copy shall be sent to the Communications Office via the PIO within a reasonable period of time following the release.
- D. Content of press releases shall be within the guidelines of this order.

V. Media Access to Major Incidents and Crime Scenes (CALEA 54.1.3), (ADM. 22.01.b)

Under no circumstances shall media representatives be allowed in the area near and around a crime scene unless the investigating officers are satisfied that the proximity of the media representatives shall not hamper the investigation or operation.

- A. "Police Lines" shall be established to prevent unauthorized persons from entering the area of a major incident or crime scene.
- B. At a minimum, the media shall be allowed the same proximity and vantage point to an incident or crime scene as the general public.
- C. Authorization for entry shall be the responsibility of the officer-in-charge (OIC) of the investigation or operation.
 1. Any person (other than those authorized by the OIC) who attempts to enter

the established boundary shall be notified that to do so will interfere with and/or obstruct the police in the performance of their duties.

2. Persons who remain may be arrested and charged with City Ordinance §29-5, Obstructing Justice and/or State Code §18.2-414.2, Crossing Established Police Lines.

D. Dependent upon the tactical situation and the likelihood of jeopardizing police operations, the OIC may allow members of the news media at scenes such as major fires, natural disasters, or other catastrophic events, unless:

1. There is an immediate threat to the safety of the media representative.
2. Media representatives hamper duties of rescue workers.
3. Media representatives violate any laws in obtaining the story.

E. "Police Lines" shall be removed as soon as possible and practical. (e.g., after removal of suspects, proper collection of evidence, etc.).

VI. Offense Information for Media Release

A. Records that are available to media representatives are:

1. Non-confidential parts of the PD 18, Incident Report (IBR).
2. Arrest summaries.

B. The above and all other offense information requested by the media shall be released in accordance with State Codes and departmental policy.

Definition

AMBER Alert: America's Missing Broadcast Emergency Response notification by law enforcement of a serious child abduction case.

Related Documents

1. G.O. OPR-720: Juveniles
2. Police Officer's Manual, Article II, Sections 19 and 20